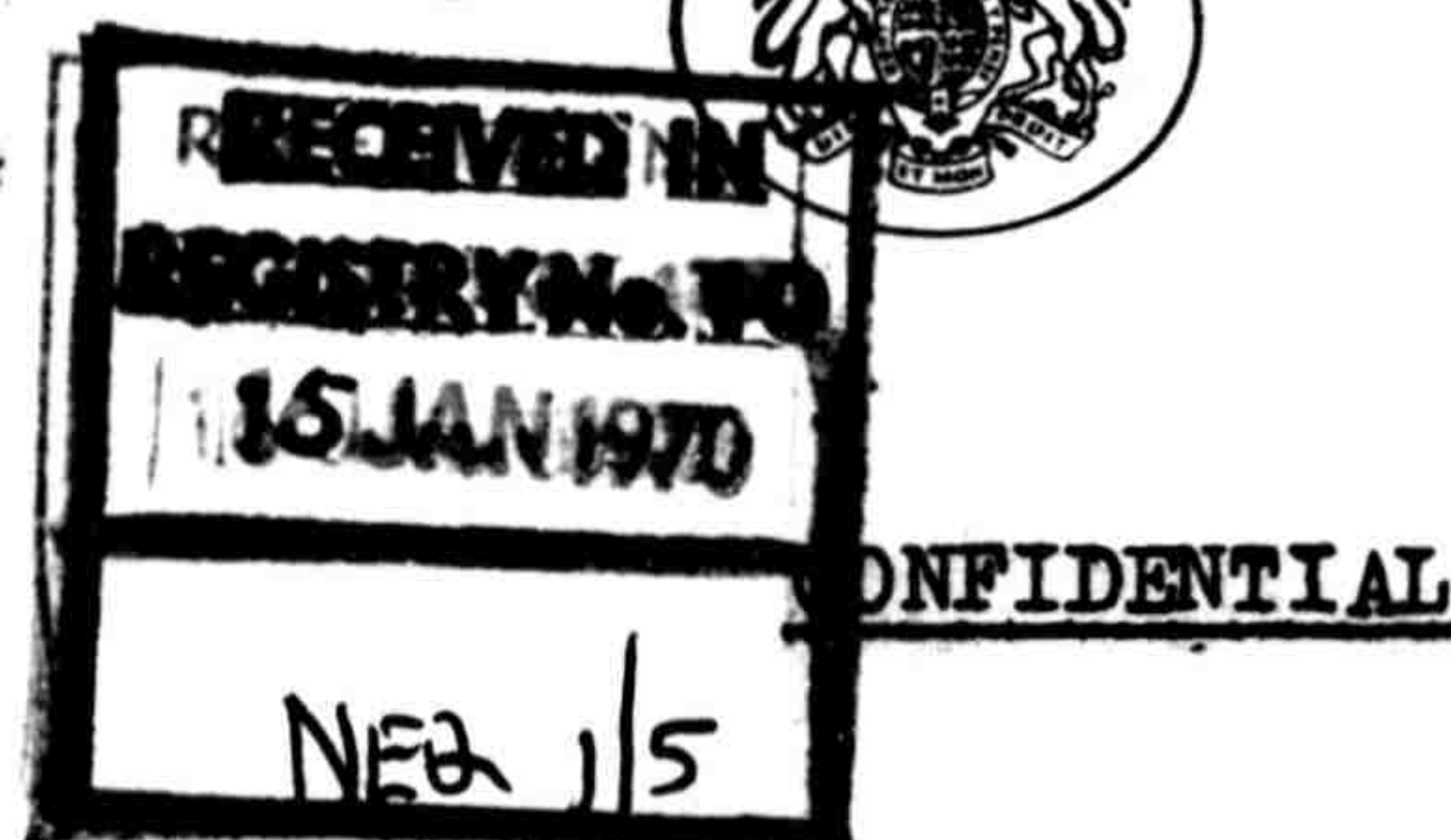




(1/3)



BRITISH EMBASSY  
BAGHDAD

6 January 1970

*Minute*

Sir,

The chronological list of events in Iraq in 1969, which I have the honour to transmit with this despatch, makes dismal reading. Spy-trials, mounting agreements with the Soviet bloc, quarrels with neighbours, Ministers in perpetual motion - these are the items that catch the eye. Signs of grace or favour, rare enough in practice, are rarer still on the list, for those that can be scraped together by a chronicler are scarcely events.

2. The year began badly for Iraq and Anglo-Iraqi relations with the hanging of fourteen alleged spies and the exhibition of their gibbeted bodies in the main square of Baghdad. The repugnance expressed throughout Britain and by yourself in particular was regarded as unwarrantable interference in Iraq's affairs. The episode involved a marked setback in the progress, recorded by my predecessor in his review of 1968, towards the normalisation of Anglo-Iraqi relations in general - this setback being immediately symbolized by the cancellation by the Iraqis at 24 hours' notice of a visit from the

/Committee

The Right Honourable  
Michael Stewart, M.P.,  
etc., etc., etc.

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Committee for Middle East Trade and by the reduction to a non-event of the first Royal Naval visit for some years. Much worse in human terms was the régime's determination to press on, despite (or because of) the outcry in the western world, with further dubious convictions for espionage. By the end of the summer the toll of those executed had passed fifty. But at least the displaying of corpses in public was abandoned; and during the last quarter the only six condemned (other than in absentia) have to date escaped execution. Apart from alleged spies, the only convictions of moment outside Iraq were those of ex-Prime Minister Bazzaz and ex-Defence Minister Ansari in November to 15 years' imprisonment for conspiracy. The number of Iraqis arrested on grounds of political non-conformity but not brought to trial was certainly substantial but probably less than those released from prison when the Ba'ath took over. Towards the end of the year the release (and even the acquittal) of political prisoners confirmed other indications that the régime had begun to settle more confidently into the saddle. It would, however, be frivolous to assume that clemency will ever overtake this or any other Iraqi Government.

3. The second unattractive feature of 1969, beginning in January and continuing crescendo throughout the year, was the régime's rapprochement with the Soviet bloc,

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stimulated by the Soviet posture on Palestine, symbolized by the lick-spittle devotion of the Iraqi press, confirmed by the recognition in April of Eastern Germany, and consummated by some 30 published agreements. Of the latter the most momentous were the Fisheries Agreement of January through which Soviet maritime and naval interests will be enabled to establish themselves at the head of the Persian Gulf, and the June/July undertakings by the Soviet Government to assist Iraq in the direct exploitation of its oil wealth. Further agreements in the last-named field were later concluded with Hungary and Czechoslovakia; and the bloc gained further favour by extending a new series of cheap development credits, for the first time since Qassem's day. The dependence of the Iraqi Armed Forces on bloc equipment became almost total. Meanwhile, Communist-protected régimes in Asia and Communist-favoured "national liberation movements" all over the place received the questionable privilege of Iraqi accolades.

4. Palestine became even more explicitly the central public concern. Pursuing its existing record of extremism Iraq openly rejected (in January) a political solution and stood throughout the year for the recovery not merely of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 but of all Palestine. With characteristic disregard for majority opinions in the Arab world, Iraq withheld her

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support from the Fatah (whose commandos early in the year were acquiring excessive local prominence), founded the Arab Liberation Front as her own commando organisation, and ended the year by backing Georges Habbash's extremist resistance movement, the PLFP.

18,000 Iraqi troops were maintained in Jordan and Syria as part of the unified Eastern Command whose structure, however, remained a model of disunity. The attitude of foreign powers to the Arab cause was repeatedly declared to be the touchstone of Iraq's relations with them. By this standard France received modest marks of favour; relations with Britain were seriously jeopardised by the rumoured sale of Chieftain tanks to Israel until the rumours expired in November; America, with or without the sale of Phantoms, remained like West Germany beyond the pale.

5. In inter-Arab affairs, Ba'athist Iraq's formulae were less straightforward and manageable. In the same way as her ardent Iraqi nationalism seems (at least to others) difficult to reconcile with her declared enthusiasm for Arab unity, so her claim to leadership of the revolutionary Arab world runs up against the modesty of her success in indoctrinating other bits of it with her own brand of revolutionary ideology. Her resentment at Egypt's continued domination of the Arab scene (and scant regard for Ba'athist Iraq) was met throughout 1969 by virtually banning news of Egypt - military exploits

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excluded - from the Iraqi press. Her attempt to "take over" the Libyan revolution in September was rebuffed. Her claims to have intervened successfully in the Lebanon crisis at the end of October and in the Saudi/South Yemeni hostilities in December were marginally more convincing (but no more than that). She had already given great offence to the Lebanon in August for ordering, on the flimsiest pretext, the departure from it within 24 hours of every Iraqi citizen, as well as curtailing trade relations for several weeks. Her relations with her sister Ba'athist régime in Syria varied throughout the year from bad to explosive. Towards the Arab emirates in the Gulf, as Britain's military withdrawal approaches, Iraq took a number of predictably ambivalent initiatives, on the one hand cultivating relations with the Rulers and declaring support for their proposed Union, on the other setting about their future subversion with a new zeal. Taken as a whole, Iraq's view of Arab statesmanship was perhaps fairly symbolized in December by walking out of the Rabat summit meeting because her own proposals were not adopted.

6. On her eastern flank, with Iran, after the brief rapprochement of late 1968, mutual distrust - arising from the Shatt-al-Arab quarrel, Iran's support for the Kurdish rebels, rival aspirations in the Gulf and general distaste for each other's politics - reached danger-point in April

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when Iran unilaterally denounced the border treaty of 1937. Opposing forces dug themselves in at the southern end of the frontier; the propaganda war reached a new frenzy. Not till October did mediation, mainly Jordanian, bear fruit. Troops withdrew, invective ceased, and hopes of at least a partial settlement by negotiation fluttered for a few weeks - vainly as it transpired.

7. In their internal affairs the Ba'athist régime can claim greater success in 1969 (in terms, at least, of their self-imposed programme) than many would expect or welcome. They have pushed ahead with the re-organisation of trade and industry in accordance with their doctrinal preferences, they have shown a new recognition of the primacy of agriculture in the national life and of the gap between the theory of agrarian reform and its practice. Their planning procedures have been sensibly overhauled. Politically, if they have failed to secure a popular base for their revolution, they have at least prohibited opposition to it. Intimidation is nothing new in Iraq; stability would be - and by the end of the year there were signs that the régime was determined to provide it. By the November amendment to the Constitution the Party demonstrated that they were no longer afraid to admit the realities of Party power. The further amendment in December made even more explicit

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the total subordination of the executive to the Party's collegiate authority. The simultaneous admission to ministerial rank of a leading member of the pro-Soviet Communist Party (which had been treated with scant respect earlier in the year) is more likely to be a sign of strength than of weakness. As for the inherited hostility of Kurds and Shi'ites, sundry attempts were made in the second half of the year to pacify the one and to mollify the latter; but effective reconciliation with either may not prove much nearer.

8. But of all Iraq's internal preoccupations oil is certainly the most engrossing, as well as the most sensitive for Anglo-Iraqi relations. This régime, like all the revolutionary régimes preceding it, aspires to direct exploitation of its own oil wealth. 1969 introduced the first practical steps in this direction, taken (as mentioned in paragraph 3) under the ominous auspices of Soviet encouragement. At the same time a genuine desire was privately disclosed by a group of leading figures in the régime to reach a settlement of Iraq's differences with the Iraq Petroleum Company which have been building up since the expropriation law of 1961. The conclusion of a Cargo Dues Agreement with the associated Basra Petroleum Company in July seemed an encouraging omen; and when preliminary contacts were at last made in November

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an unprecedented measure of goodwill on the Iraqi side, and of readiness to make concessions on the Company's side, was apparent. The residual nub of the problem proved to lie in the insistence of both sides on their respective right to control the exploitation of the proved North Rumaila field. A series of unpublicised meetings between the shareholders' delegation and the Party leaders concerned (principally General Ammash) had not, by the end of the year, given hint of a possible formula; but the hunt was not broken off. Not only the Company's standing in Iraq but Britain's position there in general (and not simply because the Iraq Petroleum Company and Her Majesty's Government are popularly regarded as one and the same thing) hangs on the result.

9. In other fields, though they pale into insignificance by comparison, the year under review has seen - despite the setback in January over the hangings - some slight progress in Anglo-Iraqi relations, at least in the commercial and cultural fields. The volume of British exports rose from £14 million to some £20 million, Vauxhall and Marconi in particular bringing off substantial deals. Britain's first participation, modest though it was, in the Baghdad Fair in October, was well regarded; and the reception given to the COMET mission in the first week of the Fair was conspicuously encouraging. The British Council, expelled in June 1967, was re-admitted in the

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middle of the year and made quiet progress under a well-chosen Director despite shortage of staff. English remains Iraq's second language; and the opportunity to build upon this, commercially as well as culturally, is still wide open. London, similarly, remains the favoured destination of almost all Iraqis who can secure temporary exit permits. Even in a politically precarious year like this, 6,000 Iraqis visited England, apart from the 1,800 or so already there for educational purposes. The BBC has remained the accepted source of reasonably objective information; and the Hodgkin article in The Times in October (on conditions in the Occupied Territories) cast doubts even on the Iraqi dogma that the whole of the British press is controlled by Zionists. A subordinate Iraqi dogma is that the British press singles out Iraq for specially unfavourable treatment from pure malice - the vicious tone of their own press being in this context conveniently overlooked. The fact remains, however, that Iraq under the Ba'ath has no wish to sever links with Britain, at Government or any other level. Indeed, the desire is constantly expressed, at all levels, to draw closer (though this does nothing to explain the quaint, and curiously widespread, fiction that the Ba'ath are kept in power by British backing). The inability of Mr. Goronwy Roberts to accept an invitation in the middle of the year to visit Iraq was

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genuinely regretted, indeed resented. The Ba'athist régime has never suspected Her Majesty's Government (as they appear to suspect the Americans) of hotly conspiring for its overthrow. But hot conspiracy, one suspects, is a lesser offence, in Iraq's curious calculations, than the cold shoulder.

10. In sum, the Ba'athist Government has emerged from 1969 unchallenged as cock of its own dunghill. The Soviet bloc has had little difficulty in coming to terms with this developing situation and exploiting it. The same cannot be said of the West.

11. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Kuwait, Jedda, Tehran and the Political Resident at Bahrain.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

*W. B. Jones*

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS 1969

- January 6 - 12 Minister of Defence, General Hardan Tikriti, visits Cairo.
- 17 Signature of Fisheries Cooperation Agreement with U.S.S.R.
- 24 Announcement of amnesty for those guilty ofousting the Ba'ath in November 1963
- 27 Fourteen spies hanged in Baghdad and Basra, their bodies being exhibited in public.
- January 27 - February 11 Visit of Iranian Government delegation for joint talks on border questions.
- January 29 Demonstration against British Embassy in Baghdad.
- February 10 - 23 Iraqi Military delegation visits Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary.
- 12 - 18 Visit of Soviet Minister of Education.
- 20 Four civilians and four soldiers executed for spying for Israel.
- Statement by Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs about Anglo-Iraqi Relations.
- 20 - 24 Visit by Sheikh Hamad Ibn Issa Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince of Bahrain.
- 26 Amnesty for all sentenced in absentia on political grounds by Security and Military Courts.
- March 5 - 7 Televised trial of four Moslems on charges of economic espionage, and their acquittal
- 14 - 16 Minister of Foreign Affairs attends Arab Foreign Ministers' Conference in Cairo.
- March 20 - April 1 Minister of Foreign Affairs visits U.S.S.R. and G.D.R.
- April 3 Aziz al-Haj, imprisoned leader of the Communist Party in Iraq interviewed on television (and subsequently released).
- 4 - 13 General Tikriti and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Information tour Gulf States.
- 7 Policy statement issued by National Command of the Ba'ath on the occasion of the Party's 22nd Anniversary.

.../April 13



April 13 Hanging of four persons accused of spying for the CIA

19 Abrogation of Iraq/Iranian Border Treaty of 1937 announced by Iran (and rejected by Iraq).

24 - 30 General Ammash visits Poland accompanied by the Minister of Economy and the Minister of Oil.

30 Revolutionary Command Council announces Iraqi recognition of G.D.R.

May 6 G.D.R. Foreign Minister, Dr. Winzer, begins official visit to Iraq.

10 Demonstration outside the Swiss Embassy in Baghdad in protest against the continued detention of three Arab guerillas involved in the Zurich incident.

15 Execution of 10 further spies.

20 One day visit (repeated 10 days later) by Jordanian Prime Minister.

23 Michel Aflaq, Secretary General of the International Ba'ath Party Command, begins first of three visits to Baghdad.

May 26 -  
June 3 General Tikriti visits Soviet Union

May 29 Council of Ministers' decision repeals restrictive legislation against Jews deprived of their Iraqi nationality.

31 Agreement signed with CENTROZAB (Poland) for direct exploitation of Al-Mishraq Sulphur Field.

June 7 TV confession of espionage by Madhat al-Haj Sirri, ex-Mayor of Baghdad.

10 Summons issued for Mehdi al-Hadim, son of Ayatullah, head of the Iraqi Shi'a.

21 Signature of Agreement between INOC and Soviet MACHINOEXPORT, for "direct exploitation" of Al-Halfiyah oilfield.

23 - 25 Visit by Sudanese Delegation under Major Abu Zaid, member of Sudanese Revolutionary Command Council

.../June 24



- June 24 -  
July 6 General Ammash, accompanied by the Minister of Oil, Minister of Economy and Chairman of INOC, visits Moscow.
- June 26 TV confession of Zaki Abdul Wahab that he spied for Britain before 1958 and for the CIA since 1963.
- July 4 Signature of Iraq/USSR Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (including provisions for the direct exploitation of North Rumaila Oil Field).
- 17 Anniversary of 17 July 1968 Revolution. Large military parade in Baghdad.
- 24 - 29 Official visit by Shaikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi
- 27 Announcement of Cargo Dues Agreement with Basra Petroleum Company
- 30 Signature of Iraq/Syria Joint Defence Pact.
- General Tikriti visits Cairo with a Military Delegation.
- August 5 General Tikriti visits Abu Dhabi
- 12 Imports of Lebanese goods and travel by Iraqis to Lebanon banned.
- 12 - 15 President Helou's personal representative, Taqieddin al-Sulh, visits Baghdad.
- 18 Iraq recalls Chargé d'Affaires from Bucharest and asks that Rumanian Ambassador should not return to Baghdad following the raising of Israeli/Rumanian diplomatic relations to Ambassadorial level.
- 25 Foreign Minister leaves for Cairo to attend meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers.
- Fifteen spies executed for spying for CIA and Israel.
- Iraq announces boycott of all imports from Iran.
- 31 Iraqi community and tourists in Lebanon instructed to leave within 24 hours.
- September 1 Iraq recognises new Libyan régime.
- 1 - 5 Generals Ammash and Tikriti attend mini-Summit in Cairo
- 5 - 7 Minister of Foreign Affairs and General Ammash visit Libya.

.../September 8



September 8 Execution of three persons for espionage on behalf of CIA and Israeli intelligence.

12 - 16 Minister of Foreign Affairs tours Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain

October 1 - 30 Baghdad International Trade Fair

3 General Ammash leads delegation to G.D.R. for 20th Anniversary Celebrations.

10 - 17 Visit by Committee for Middle East Trade (COMET).

19 - 23 General Tikriti visits Khartoum and Cairo.

21 Signature of contract with Hungary for drilling in North Rumaila.

22 Demonstration against the Lebanese Embassy in Baghdad

26 Eight political prisoners, including Abdul Hadi Al-Rawi, ex-Minister of Agriculture, pardoned.

October 24 - November 3 General Ammash visits Cairo, Tripoli and Beirut in effort to mediate in the Lebanese crisis.

October 29 Fourth Annual Conference of Arab members of OPEC opens in Baghdad.

30 Announcement that hostile propaganda between Iraq and Iran is to cease.

November 2 Balfour Day. Demonstrations in Independence Square and elsewhere in Iraq.

4 21 persons acquitted on charges of espionage for Iran and Israel.

4 General Ammash flies to Jordan and is received by King Hussein.

6 - 12 General Tikriti attends meeting in Cairo of Arab League Defence Ministers.

10 Announcement of Third Amendment to the Interim Constitution; Saddam Hussein named as Deputy to the President and membership of the R.C.C. extended to 15 to incorporate members of the Regional Leadership of the Ba'ath Party.

.../November 14



- 5 -

- November 14 - 16 General Ammash and Dr. Izzat Mustapha, Minister of Health, visit Libya.
- November 22 -  
December 1 General Ammash, accompanied by the Minister of Oil and Chairman of INOC, visits Czechoslovakia.
- November 25 Announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations at Ambassadorial level between the "Revolutionary Republic of South Vietnam" and Iraq.
- 26 Beirut newspaper reports that six Iraqis, including Rashid Muslih and Madhat al Haj Sirri, have been sentenced to death for spying for CIA and that Bazzaz and Ansari have been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for conspiracy.
- December 4 - 9 Dr. Jawari, Minister of Education, visits Aden and Riyadh in mediation attempt on Saudi/South Yemeni border dispute.
- December 19 - 27 General Tikriti, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Youth, the Minister of State for Presidential Affairs and the Ministers of Economy and Education, attends Arab Summit in Rabat, stopping three days in Cairo in each direction.
- 29 Revolutionary Court passes death sentence on 14 persons in absentia.
- Demonstrations against Swiss Embassy protesting at verdict of Swiss Court against Arab guerillas.
- 31 Major Cabinet reshuffle.



## Annual Review: Iraq 1969

### Summary

1. The year began badly. Spy trials and public executions. Repugnance expressed in Britain; Iraqi reactions (1-2).
2. Iraq's increasing rapprochement with the Soviet bloc - fishing agreements, oil exploitation, development grants, equipment for the armed forces (3).
3. Palestine increasingly the subject of public concern. Iraqi support for the extremist PFLP. 18,000 Iraqi troops maintained in Jordan and Syria (4); In other Arab fields - a difference with Egypt, Syria and Lebanon; emphasised in December by walking out of the Rabat Summit meeting (5).  
Quarrels with Iran over the <sup>Shatt al Arab</sup> ~~Shatt al Arab~~ and Kurdish rebels (6).
4. The regime made some progress in internal affairs. Re-organisation of trade and industry, reform of planning procedures, amendments to the constitution to re-inforce the group of the Ba'athist party. Failure to achieve reconciliation with Kurds or Shi'a (7).



5. The cargo dues agreement with Basra Petroelum Company in July seemed an encouraging omission, but there was no success in the major negotiations with Iraq Petroleum Company (8).

6. U.K. relations. Some modest progress in the commercial and cultural fields. Exports rose from 14 million to 20 million sterling. British participation in the Baghdad fair and visit of the COMET Mission. British Council re-established in Baghdad in June (9).

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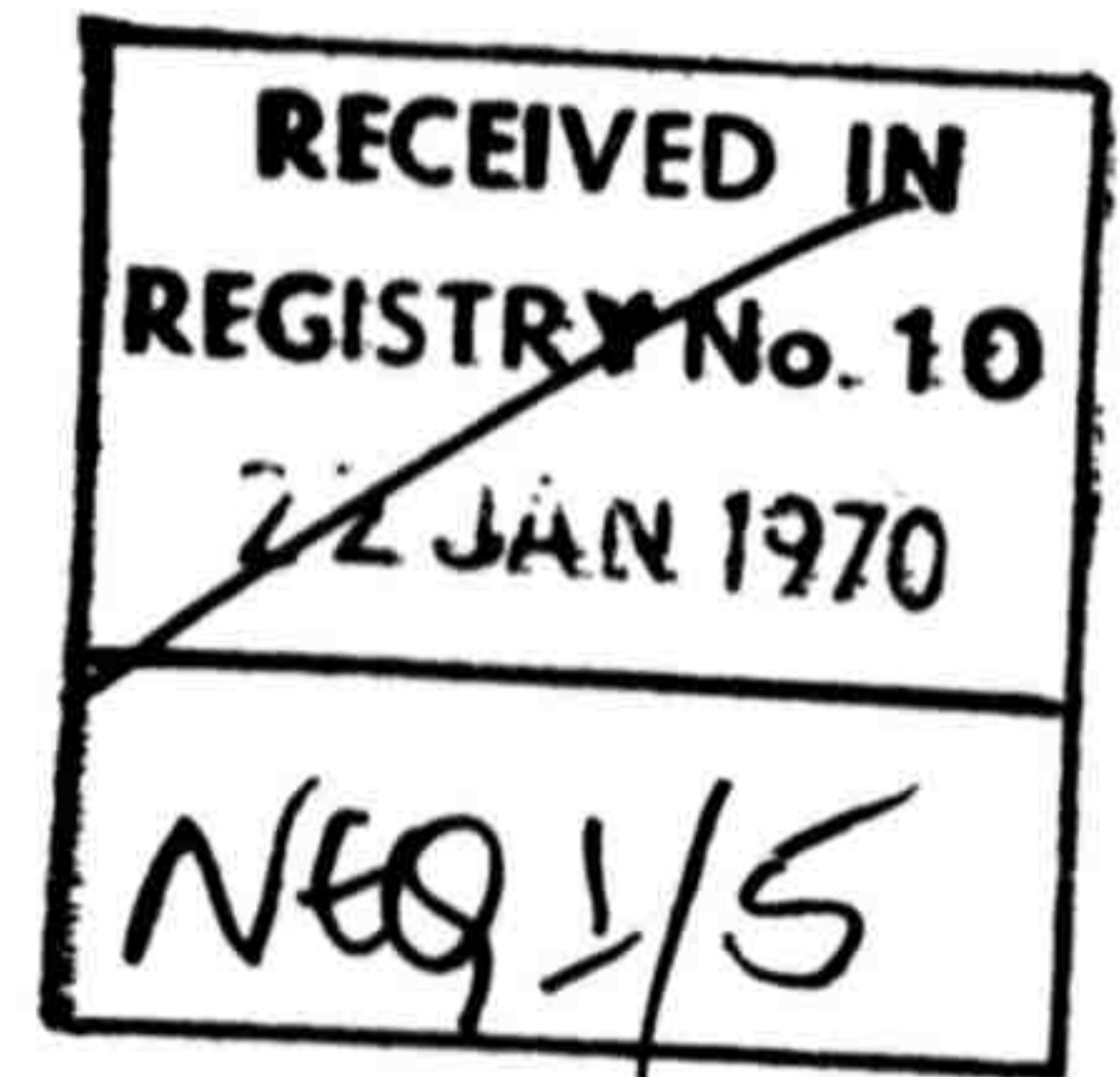


BRITISH EMBASSY

BAGHDAD

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IRAQ - ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1969

SUMMARY

1. The chronological list of events makes dismal reading (Paragraph 1).
2. Set-back to normalization of Anglo-Iraqi relations caused by hanging of alleged spies in January. Trials and executions tailed off in the second half of the year, but clemency will never be an Iraqi characteristic. (Paragraph 2).
3. Relations with the Soviet bloc have disturbingly expanded, especially in petroleum affairs and in respect of equipment of the Armed Forces. (Paragraph 3).
4. The Palestine issue has become even more explicitly the focus for Iraqi extremism as well as the touchstone of Iraqi foreign relations. (Paragraph 4).
5. Iraq's interventions in Arab affairs have done little to improve her standing in the Arab world. Her ambivalent attitude to Persian Gulf Emirates. (Paragraph 5).
6. Explosive relations with Iran reached danger-point in April but reverted to "normal" in October when faint hopes were abroad of a partial settlement of the Shatt-al-Arab dispute. (Paragraph 6).
7. Internally, the Iraqi Ba'ath has openly established its monopoly of power and pushed ahead with its party programme. Little progress on reconciliation with the Kurds or the Shi'a. (Paragraph 7).
8. Developments in oil affairs. Renewed efforts at the end of the year by I.P.C. shareholders to reach an understanding with Iraq. Anglo-Iraqi relations hang largely on the result. (Paragraph 8).
9. Some progress in other fields. British exports have increased. The British Council has reopened. There is no Iraqi desire to sever links. (Paragraph 9).
10. The Iraqi Ba'ath has emerged from 1969 unchallenged as cock of its own dunghill. The Soviet bloc has made itself the principal beneficiary. (Paragraph 10).

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*Crabtree - Dev.*  
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**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

**DIPLOMATIC REPORT No 85/70**

NEQ 1/5

*North Africa and Middle East Distribution*

**IRAQ**  
**22 January, 1970**

## **IRAQ: ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1969**

*The British Ambassador in Iraq to the  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
(Received 22 January)*

### **SUMMARY**

The year began badly. Spy trials and public executions. Repugnance expressed in Britain; Iraqi reactions (paragraphs 1-2).

2. Iraq's increasing rapprochement with the Soviet *bloc*—fishing agreements, oil exploitation, development grants, equipment for the armed forces (paragraph 3).

3. Palestine increasingly the subject of public concern. Iraqi support for the extremist PFLP. 18,000 Iraqi troops maintained in Jordan and Syria (paragraph 4); in other Arab fields—a difference with Egypt, Syria and Lebanon; emphasised in December by walking out of the Rabat summit meeting (paragraph 5). Quarrels with Iran over the Shatt al Arab and Kurdish rebels (paragraph 6).

4. The régime made some progress in internal affairs. Re-organisation of trade and industry, reform of planning procedures, amendments to the Constitution to re-inforce the group of the Ba'athist Party. Failure to achieve reconciliation with Kurds or Shi'a (paragraph 7).

5. The cargo dues agreement with Basra Petroleum Company in July seemed an encouraging omission, but there was no success in the major negotiations with Iraq Petroleum Company (paragraph 8).

6. United Kingdom relations. Some modest progress in the commercial and cultural fields. Exports rose from £14 million to £20 million sterling. British participation in the Baghdad fair and visit of the COMET Mission. British Council re-established in Baghdad in June (paragraph 9).

(Confidential)

*Baghdad,*

Sir,

*6 January, 1970.*

The chronological list of events in Iraq in 1969, which I have the honour to transmit with this despatch, makes dismal reading. Spy-trials, mounting agreements with the Soviet *bloc*, quarrels with neighbours, Ministers in perpetual motion—these are the items that catch the eye. Signs of grace or favour, rare enough in practice, are rarer still on the list, for those that can be scraped together by a chronicler are scarcely events.

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2. The year began badly for Iraq and Anglo-Iraqi relations with the hanging of 14 alleged spies and the exhibition of their gibbeted bodies in the main square of Baghdad. The repugnance expressed throughout Britain and by yourself in particular was regarded as unwarrantable interference in Iraq's affairs. The episode involved a marked setback in the progress, recorded by my predecessor in his review of 1968, towards the normalisation of Anglo-Iraqi relations in general—this setback being immediately symbolised by the cancellation by the Iraqis at 24 hours' notice of a visit from the Committee for Middle East Trade and by the reduction to a non-event of the first Royal Naval visit for some years. Much worse in human terms was the régime's determination to press on, despite (or because of) the outcry in the Western world, with further dubious convictions for espionage. By the end of the summer the toll of those executed had passed 50. But at least the displaying of corpses in public was abandoned; and during the last quarter the only six condemned (other than *in absentia*) have to date escaped execution. Apart from alleged spies, the only convictions of moment outside Iraq were those of ex-Prime Minister Bazzaz and ex-Defence Minister Ansari in November to 15 years' imprisonment for conspiracy. The number of Iraqis arrested on grounds of political non-conformity but not brought to trial was certainly substantial but probably less than those released from prison when the Ba'ath took over. Towards the end of the year the release (and even the acquittal) of political prisoners confirmed other indications that the régime had begun to settle more confidently into the saddle. It would, however, be frivolous to assume that clemency will ever overtake this or any other Iraqi Government.

3. The second unattractive feature of 1969, beginning in January and continuing crescendo throughout the year, was the régime's rapprochement with the Soviet *bloc*, stimulated by the Soviet posture on Palestine, symbolised by the lick-spittle devotion of the Iraqi Press, confirmed by the recognition in April of Eastern Germany, and consummated by some 30 published agreements. Of the latter the most momentous were the Fisheries Agreement of January through which Soviet maritime and naval interests will be enabled to establish themselves at the head of the Persian Gulf, and the June/July undertakings by the Soviet Government to assist Iraq in the direct exploitation of its oil wealth. Further agreements in the last-named field were later concluded with Hungary and Czechoslovakia; and the *bloc* gained further favour by extending a new series of cheap development credits, for the first time since Qassem's day. The dependence of the Iraqi Armed Forces on *bloc* equipment became almost total. Meanwhile, Communist-protected régimes in Asia and Communist-favoured "national liberation movements" all over the place received the questionable privilege of Iraqi accolades.

4. Palestine became even more explicitly the central public concern. Pursuing its existing record of extremism Iraq openly rejected (in January) a political solution and stood throughout the year for the recovery not merely of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 but of all Palestine. With characteristic disregard for majority opinions in the Arab world, Iraq withheld her support from the Fatah (whose commandos early in the year were acquiring excessive local prominence), founded the Arab Liberation Front as her own commando organisation, and ended the year by backing Georges Habbash's extremist resistance movement, the PLFP. 18,000 Iraqi troops were maintained in Jordan and Syria as part of the unified Eastern Command whose structure, however, remained a model of disunity. The attitude of foreign Powers to the Arab cause was repeatedly declared to be the touchstone of Iraq's relations with them. By this standard France received modest marks of favour; relations with Britain were seriously jeopardised by the rumoured

sale of Chieftain tanks to Israel until the rumours expired in November; America, with or without the sale of Phantoms, remained like West Germany beyond the pale.

5. In inter-Arab affairs, Ba'athist Iraq's formulae were less straightforward and manageable. In the same way as her ardent Iraqi Nationalism seems (at least to others) difficult to reconcile with her declared enthusiasm for Arab unity, so her claim to leadership of the revolutionary Arab world runs up against the modesty of her success in indoctrinating other bits of it with her own brand of revolutionary ideology. Her resentment at Egypt's continued domination of the Arab scene (and scant regard for Ba'athist Iraq) was met throughout 1969 by virtually banning news of Egypt—military exploits excluded—from the Iraqi Press. Her attempt to “take over” the Libyan revolution in September was rebuffed. Her claims to have intervened successfully in the Lebanon crisis at the end of October and in the Saudi/South Yemeni hostilities in December were marginally more convincing (but no more than that). She had already given great offence to the Lebanon in August for ordering, on the flimsiest pretext, the departure from it within 24 hours of every Iraqi citizen, as well as curtailing trade relations for several weeks. Her relations with her sister Ba'athist régime in Syria varied throughout the year from bad to explosive. Towards the Arab emirates in the Gulf, as Britain's military withdrawal approaches, Iraq took a number of predictably ambivalent initiatives, on the one hand cultivating relations with the Rulers and declaring support for their proposed Union, on the other setting about their future subversion with a new zeal. Taken as a whole, Iraq's view of Arab statesmanship was perhaps fairly symbolised in December by walking out of the Rabat summit meeting because her own proposals were not adopted.

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7. In their internal affairs the Ba'athist régime can claim greater success in 1969 (in terms, at least, of their self-imposed programme) than many would expect or welcome. They have pushed ahead with the re-organisation of trade and industry in accordance with their doctrinal preferences, they have shown a new recognition of the primacy of agriculture in the national life and of the gap between the theory of agrarian reform and its practice. Their planning procedures have been sensibly overhauled. Politically, if they have failed to secure a popular base for their revolution, they have at least prohibited opposition to it. Intimidation is nothing new in Iraq; stability would be—and by the end of the year there were signs that the régime was determined to provide it. By the November amendment to the constitution the party demonstrated that they were no longer afraid to admit the realities of party power. The further amendment in December made even more explicit the total subordination of the executive to the party's collegiate authority. The simultaneous admission to Ministerial rank of a leading member of the pro-Soviet Communist Party (which had been treated with scant respect earlier in the year) is more likely to be a sign of strength than of weakness. As for the inherited hostility of Kurds and Shi'ites, sundry attempts were made in the second

half of the year to pacify the one and to mollify the latter ; but effective reconciliation with either may not prove much nearer.

8. But of all Iraq's internal preoccupations oil is certainly the most engrossing, as well as the most sensitive for Anglo-Iraqi relations. This régime, like all the revolutionary régimes preceding it, aspires to direct exploitation of its own oil wealth. 1969 introduced the first practical steps in this direction, taken (as mentioned in paragraph 3) under the ominous auspices of Soviet encouragement. At the same time a genuine desire was privately disclosed by a group of leading figures in the régime to reach a settlement of Iraq's differences with the Iraq Petroleum Company which have been building up since the expropriation law of 1961. The conclusion of a Cargo Dues Agreement with the associated Basra Petroleum Company in July seemed an encouraging omen; and when preliminary contacts were at last made in November an unprecedented measure of goodwill on the Iraqi side, and of readiness to make concessions on the Company's side, was apparent. The residual nub of the problem proved to lie in the insistence of both sides on their respective right to control the exploitation of the proved North Rumaila field. A series of unpublicised meetings between the shareholders' delegation and the party leaders concerned (principally General Ammash) had not, by the end of the year, given hint of a possible formula; but the hunt was not broken off. Not only the Company's standing in Iraq but Britain's position there in general (and not simply because the Iraq Petroleum Company and Her Majesty's Government are popularly regarded as one and the same thing) hangs on the result.

9. In other fields, though they pale into insignificance by comparison, the year under review has seen—despite the setback in January over the hangings—some slight progress in Anglo-Iraqi relations, at least in the commercial and cultural fields. The volume of British exports rose from £14 million to some £20 million, Vauxhall and Marconi in particular bringing off substantial deals. Britain's first participation, modest though it was, in the Baghdad Fair in October, was well regarded; and the reception given to the COMET Mission in the first week of the Fair was conspicuously encouraging. The British Council, expelled in June 1967, was re-admitted in the middle of the year and made quiet progress under a well-chosen Director despite shortage of staff. English remains Iraq's second language; and the opportunity to build upon this, commercially as well as culturally, is still wide open. London, similarly, remains the favoured destination of almost all Iraqis who can secure temporary exit permits. Even in a politically precarious year like this, 6,000 Iraqis visited England, apart from the 1,800 or so already there for educational purposes. The BBC has remained the accepted source of reasonably objective information; and the Hodgkin article in *The Times* in October (on conditions in the occupied territories) cast doubts even on the Iraqi dogma that the whole of the British Press is controlled by Zionists. A subordinate Iraqi dogma is that the British Press singles out Iraq for specially unfavourable treatment from pure malice—the vicious tone of their own Press being in this context conveniently overlooked. The fact remains, however, that Iraq under the Ba'ath has no wish to sever links with Britain, at Government or any other level. Indeed, the desire is constantly expressed at all levels, to draw closer (though this does nothing to explain the quaint, and curiously widespread, fiction that the Ba'ath are kept in power by British backing). The inability of Mr. Goronwy Roberts to accept an invitation in the middle of the year to visit Iraq was genuinely regretted, indeed resented. The Ba'athist régime has never suspected Her Majesty's Government (as they appear to suspect the Americans) of hotly conspiring for its overthrow. But hot conspiracy, one suspects, is a lesser offence, in Iraq's curious calculations, than the cold shoulder.

10. In sum, the Ba'athist Government has emerged from 1969 unchallenged as cock of its own dunghill. The Soviet *bloc* has had little difficulty in coming to terms with this developing situation and exploiting it. The same cannot be said of the West.

11. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Kuwait, Jedda, Tehran and the Political Resident at Bahrain.

I have, etc.,

H. G. BALFOUR PAUL.

### Enclosure

### Calendar of events in 1969

- January*
- 8-12 Minister of Defence, General Hardan Tikriti, visits Cairo.
  - 17 Signature of Fisheries Co-operation Agreement with USSR.
  - 24 Announcement of amnesty for those guilty of ousting the Ba'ath in November 1963.
  - 27 Fourteen spies hanged in Baghdad and Basra, their bodies being exhibited in public.
  - 27 Jan.-11 Feb. Visit of Iranian Government delegation for joint talks on border questions.
  - 29 Demonstration against British Embassy in Baghdad.
- February*
- 10-23 Iraqi military delegation visits Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary.
  - 12-18 Visit of Soviet Minister of Education.
  - 20 Four civilians and four soldiers executed for spying for Israel.
  - Statement by Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs about Anglo-Iraqi relations.
  - 20-24 Visit by Shiekh Hamad Ibn Issa Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince of Bahrain.
  - 26 Amnesty for all sentenced *in absentia* on political grounds by Security and Military Courts.
- March*
- 5-7 Televised trial of four Moslems on charges of economic espionage, and their acquittal.
  - 14-16 Minister of Foreign Affairs attends Arab Foreign Ministers' Conference in Cairo.
  - 20 Mar.-1 Apr. Minister of Foreign Affairs visits USSR and GDR.
- April*
- 3 Aziz al-Haj, imprisoned leader of the Communist Party in Iraq interviewed on television (and subsequently released).
  - 4-13 General Tikriti and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Information tour Gulf States.
  - 7 Policy statement issued by National Command of the Ba'ath on the occasion of the party's 22nd anniversary.
  - 13 Hanging of four persons accused of spying for the CIA.
  - 19 Abrogation of Iraq/Iranian Border Treaty of 1937 announced by Iran (and rejected by Iraq).
  - 24-30 General Ammash visits Poland accompanied by the Minister of Economy and the Minister of Oil.
  - 30 Revolutionary Command Council announces Iraqi recognition of GDR.
- May*
- 6 GDR Foreign Minister, Dr. Winzer, begins official visit to Iraq.
  - 10 Demonstration outside the Swiss Embassy in Baghdad in protest against the continued detention of three Arab guerillas involved in the Zurich incident.
  - 15 Execution of a further 10 spies.
  - 20 One-day visit (repeated 10 days later) by Jordanian Prime Minister.
  - 23 Michel Aflaq, Secretary-General of the International Ba'ath Party Command, begins first of three visits to Baghdad.

**CONFIDENTIAL***May*

- 26 May-3 June General Tikriti visits Soviet Union.  
 29 Council of Ministers' decision repeals restrictive legislation against Jews deprived of their Iraqi nationality.  
 31 Agreement signed with CENTROZAB (Poland) for direct exploitation of Al-Mishraq Sulphur Field.

*June*

- 7 Television confession of espionage by Madhat al-Haj Sirri, ex-Mayor of Baghdad.  
 10 Summons issued for Mehdi al-Hadim, son of Ayatullah, head of the Iraqi Shi'a.  
 21 Signature of Agreement between INOC and Soviet MACHINOEXPORT, for "direct exploitation" of Al-Halfiyah oilfield.  
 23-25 Visit by Sudanese delegation under Major Abu Zaid, member of Sudanese Revolutionary Command Council.  
 24 June-6 July General Ammash, accompanied by the Minister of Oil, Minister of Economy and Chairman of INOC, visits Moscow.  
 26 Television confession of Zaki Abdul Wahab that he spied for Britain before 1958 and for the CIA since 1963.

*July*

- 4 Signature of Iraq/USSR Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement (including provisions for the direct exploitation of North Rumaila Oil Field).  
 17 Anniversary of 17 July, 1968, revolution. Large military parade in Baghdad.  
 24-29 Official visit by Shaikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi.  
 27 Announcement of Cargo Dues Agreement with Basra Petroleum Company.  
 30 Signature of Iraq/Syria Joint Defence Pact.  
 General Tikriti visits Cairo with a military delegation.

*August*

- 5 General Tikriti visits Abu Dhabi.  
 12 Imports of Lebanese goods and travel by Iraqis to Lebanon banned.  
 12-15 President Helou's personal representative, Taqieddin al-Sulh, visits Baghdad.  
 18 Iraq recalls Chargé d'Affaires from Bucharest and asks that Rumanian Ambassador should not return to Baghdad following the raising of Israeli/Rumanian diplomatic relations to Ambassadorial level.  
 25 Foreign Minister leaves for Cairo to attend meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers. Fifteen spies executed for spying for CIA and Israel.  
 Iraq announces boycott of all imports from Iran.  
 31 Iraqi community and tourists in Lebanon instructed to leave within 24 hours.

*September*

- 1 Iraq recognises new Libyan régime.  
 1-5 Generals Ammash and Tikriti attend mini-Summit in Cairo.  
 5-7 Minister of Foreign Affairs and General Ammash visit Libya.  
 8 Execution of three persons for espionage on behalf of CIA and Israeli intelligence.  
 12-16 Minister of Foreign Affairs tours Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain.

*October*

- 1-30 Baghdad International Trade Fair.  
 3 General Ammash leads delegation to GDR for 20th anniversary celebrations.  
 10-17 Visit by Committee for Middle East Trade (COMET).  
 19-23 General Tikriti visits Khartoum and Cairo.  
 21 Signature of contract with Hungary for drilling in North Rumaila.  
 22 Demonstration against the Lebanese Embassy in Baghdad.  
 26 Eight political prisoners, including Abdul Hadi Al-Rawi, ex-Minister of Agriculture, pardoned.  
 27 Oct.-3 Nov. General Ammash visits Cairo, Tripoli and Beirut in effort to mediate in the Lebanese crisis.  
 29 Fourth Annual Conference of Arab members of OPEC opens in Baghdad.  
 30 Announcement that hostile propaganda between Iraq and Iran is to cease.

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*November*

- 2 Balfour Day. Demonstrations in Independence Square and elsewhere in Iraq.
- 4 Twenty-one persons acquitted on charges of espionage for Iran and Israel.  
General Ammash flies to Jordan and is received by King Hussein.
- 6-12 General Tikriti attends meeting in Cairo of Arab League Defence Ministers.
- 10 Announcement of Third Amendment to the Interim Constitution; Saddam Hussein named as Deputy to the President and membership of the RCC extended to 15 to incorporate members of the Regional Leadership of the Ba'ath Party.
- 14-16 General Ammash and Dr. Izzat Mustapha, Minister of Health, visit Libya.
- 22 Nov.-1 Dec. General Ammash, accompanied by the Minister of Oil and Chairman of INOC, visits Czechoslovakia.
- 25 Announcement of the establishment of diplomatic relations at Ambassadorial level between the " Revolutionary Republic of South Viet-Nam " and Iraq.
- 26 Beirut newspaper reports that six Iraqis, including Rashid Muslih and Madhat al Haj Sirri, have been sentenced to death for spying for CIA and that Bazzaz and Ansari have been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for conspiracy.

*December*

- 4-9 Dr. Jawari, Minister of Education, visits Aden and Riyadh in mediation attempt on Saudi/South Yemeni border dispute.
- 19-27 General Tikriti, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Youth, the Minister of State for Presidential Affairs and the Ministers of Economy and Education, attends Arab Summit in Rabat, stopping three days in Cairo in each direction.
- 29 Revolutionary Court passes death sentence on 14 persons *in absentia*.  
Demonstrations against Swiss Embassy protesting at verdict of Swiss Court against Arab guerillas.
- 31 Major Cabinet reshuffle.

Mr Tapp.

We have received Baghdad despatch of 6 Jan; the Annual Review for last year. As expected it has little encouraging to report.

I do not recommend priority printing or advance circulation.

Under the new rules the despatch qualifies for regional distribution. I have completed form LR 20, & prepared a copy.

J. M. Minton.  
19. 1. 70

1. Submit a copy with the old pro-forma appropriately amended, so that it can put up 15 Under Secretaries of the P.O.S.  
2. Pl also draft a letter of thanks from me to Mr Belfour Paul.  
3. (Should we not provide a summary?) 9.13/20.11.

Mr Minton.

Mr Tapp.

1. Attd., contra  
2. Below  
3. Attd.

J. M. Minton.  
20/

PA. Jan 21/

NEQ 1/5 (3)  
BRITISH EMBASSY

BAGHDAD

12 January 1970



Dear Department,

We regret that the Summary was omitted from the Ambassador's Annual Review despatch of 6 January. It will be forwarded in the next Confidential bag.

Yours ever,

CHANCERY

Near Eastern Department,  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,  
London, S.W.1.

Copies to: H.M.R.R. at Amman, Beirut, Cairo,  
Kuwait, Jedda, Tehran and the  
Political Resident, Bahrain.

Sheddy done by DTM!

PO.

AMMA 4/1.

CONFIDENTIAL



*With the compliments of*  
**CHANCERY**

Ref. our letter (1/3) of 12  
January.

*Reg. he already  
have a summary prepared  
by Mr. Mokenham which  
is now being  
checked.*

**BRITISH EMBASSY**

**BAGHDAD**

Near Eastern Department,  
F.C.O.,  
London, S.W.1.

*no action  
on this one*

*PMMA 46/1. P.A.*

**Near Eastern Department,**

RESTRICTED

NEQ 1/5(4)

**21 January, 1970.**

**(NEQ 1/5)**

**LAST PAPER**

**Thank you very much for your annual review of events in Iraq in 1969.**

**2. As you say, it makes dismal reading. But within the limitations of our policy on Palestine and the IPC's difficulties, it is gratifying to read of the progress albeit limited, which you describe in para. 9 of your despatch.**

**(J. P. Tripp)**

**H. G. Balfour-Paul, Esq., C.M.G.,  
BAGHDAD.**

**LAST PAPER**

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Iraq: Annual Review For 1969. Annual Review For Iraq. 6 Jan. 1970. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 17/1239. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107509951/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=7019663a&pg=1](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107509951/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=7019663a&pg=1). Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.